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# Whose Town? The Rise of the Elite in Augustan Pompeii

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## INTRODUCTION

Famously, Augustus claimed to have found Rome a city of brick, but left it a city of marble (Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, II.28.3). Augustus' transformation of Rome's monuments has been well-studied, but scholars have only begun to look outward from the Fora both to the rest of the city and to Rome's provinces. In Rome's neighborhoods, Lott argues, "[t]he decision to title the compital Lares with the epithet Augusti pulled the neighborhoods, their religion, and their inhabitants into the new system of the Principate and declared the active support [of] the city's lower classes to be one of the ideals of the new regime."<sup>1</sup> This paper aims to examine Lott's argument in the south Italian setting of Pompeii, drawing upon the growing body of Pompeian spatial analysis to see whether his localized transformations take place in another urban setting. I argue that, as at Rome, the Augustan era fundamentally transformed Pompeii, but here the lower classes lost power over urban space. Through building projects that emphasized elite control over important social centers, Augustan Pompeii's upper classes found Pompeii a mixed-use city, but they left it a city reflecting their own urban priorities and desire for social standing in the new empire.

In this paper, I will trace the ascent of Pompeii's elite, using a variety of evidence to argue that the transition from Republican to early Imperial power systems allowed the town's upper classes to gradually increase their power at the expense of Pompeii's other classes. After exploring the evidence for class structures in Pompeii, I will rely on a key form of material evidence—the shrines to the *Lares Compitales*—to identify power structures in the Republican urban environment. Then, I will compare Pompeii's Augustan transformations to Rome's by focusing on a new piece of material evidence, the city's water fountains. Finally, I will discuss

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<sup>1</sup> J. Bert Lott, *The Neighborhoods of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 110.

how the emergence of the fountains creates elite power and reinforces the role of the elite as intermediaries between Imperial Rome and Pompeii.

#### URBAN IDENTITY: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CLASSES OF POMPEII

Without mindreading or time travel, it is difficult to understand how Pompeians thought about class or interacted within or across classes on a daily basis. Clearly, a variety of classes existed at Pompeii, using the same urban spaces in different ways. As each group attempted to live out their own priorities within Pompeii's urban landscape, their different uses of the town's public spaces produced an urban environment that reflected the needs of one class, many, or perhaps none.

It is easy to spot the presence of Pompeii's elite: electoral advertisements, dedicatory inscriptions, and elaborate tombs list the town's influential men and women.<sup>2</sup> This evidence reveals that Pompeii's elite classes predominately consisted of freeborn men and women expected to contribute to the town through donations and, for men, through elected office. Who exactly belonged to this social group seems to have changed over the years as Roman colonists and native Pompeians "form[ed] a unified elite" and as some descendants of the wealthy non-elite eventually joined their ranks.<sup>3</sup> Even as the makeup of the elite population changed, William M. Jongman argues that elite culture was relatively stable because "social climbers had to conform and socialize to the norms and values of the existing elite."<sup>4</sup> Elections were key to this maintenance of a stable elite culture since the need for votes created consistent self-presentation.

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<sup>2</sup> Alison E. Cooley and M. G. L. Cooley, *Pompeii: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 137.

<sup>3</sup> Joanne Berry, *The Complete Pompeii* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007): 90.

<sup>4</sup> William M. Jongman, "The Loss of Innocence: Pompeian Economy and Society between Past and Present," in *The World of Pompeii*, ed. John J. Dobbins and Pedar W. Foss (New York: Routledge, 2007): 512.

In order to win, elite Pompeians needed to look like the type of people who usually won. Pompeii's elite relied upon public visibility for this self-promotion and success. Consequently, urban spaces became billboards, and the elite commissioned both grand houses and public buildings in high-traffic areas in order to network and display their power.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the relatively unified goal of self-promotion amongst the elite, Rome's various other classes had a wide range of interactions with urban space. First, the 'middle' classes. This all-too-modern blanket term denotes the many Pompeians who did not access the game of donation and election played by Pompeii's elite, but who seem to have been self-sufficient, largely involved in one of Pompeii's various trades. Epitaphs reveal that many non-elite groups valued occupation, choosing to emphasize their work as a part of their identity on tombstones. In a broad study of epitaphs describing trades, Sandra R. Joshel finds that manufacture and administrative work are most frequently listed on Roman tombstones.<sup>6</sup> Although her study ranges from the late first century BCE to the late second century CE, Pompeiian epitaphs in the late Republican and imperial periods reveal a similar emphasis on occupation, listing a variety of occupations including surveying (D'Ambrosio and De Caro 17a/b OS).

Due to the importance of occupation for these classes, studying trade patterns and shop placements within Pompeii provides insights into the way these groups valued urban space. Like the elite houses that promoted their owners' wealth along major streets, a variety of shops including bars, laundry, and dyers utilized major streets with heavy pedestrian traffic to drum up business. In contrast, mills, bakeries, and workshops preferred streets that facilitated "the

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Kaiser, *Roman Urban Street Networks* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 83.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra R. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1992): 69.

movement of bulky raw materials and fuels as well as finished products via carts.”<sup>7</sup> By the time of Vesuvius’ eruption, as we shall see, there were very few streets that met the criteria of the mills, bakeries, and workshops. The placement of these various types of businesses reveals that Pompeii’s ‘middle’ classes focused on the urban space’s traffic patterns, attempting to maximize their accessibility for either pedestrians or carts.

Further down the ladder, Rome’s free poor likely included prostitutes,<sup>8</sup> cart drivers,<sup>9</sup> and other socially marginalized workers. Generally, these groups seem to have worked in less visible streets throughout Pompeii’s urban environment. Although disputes over which structures count as brothels make it difficult to analyze their spatial distribution, Alan Kaiser notes that Pompeii’s one definitive brothel is located away from major streets.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the same cart traffic limitations that affected the placement of mills, bakeries, and workshops forced cart drivers to certain streets in Pompeii, cutting them off from major routes through the city.<sup>11</sup> Pompeians seem to have restricted poor occupations to less visible parts of town; however, this does not mean that the poor were entirely invisible at Pompeii. It is difficult to find material evidence for the ways in which Pompeians moved through urban space on a daily basis, but it is likely that the free poor interacted with other Pompeians more often than this spatial analysis suggests. What is clear, though, is that the use of back streets limited the visibility of low-status professions, thereby limiting the ways in which lower-class people could promote their professions or status in high-profile parts of town.

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<sup>7</sup> Kaiser, *Roman Urban Street Networks*, 97.

<sup>8</sup> Ray Laurence, *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1996): 60.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Kaiser, “Cart Traffic Flow in Pompeii and Rome,” in *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*, ed. Ray Laurence and David J. Newsome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 187.

<sup>10</sup> Kaiser, *Roman Urban Street Networks*, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Kaiser, “Cart Traffic Flow in Pompeii and Rome,” 181.

Finally, there were two other key classes at Pompeii: freedpeople and slaves. However, unlike the elite, ‘middle’ classes, and free poor, these latter categories were social classes rather than economic. During the late Republican and early imperial periods, many freedpeople became extraordinarily wealthy while retaining class distinctions that limited their social mobility. No matter how wealthy, freedpeople were not eligible for public office, the major route to power for the elite.<sup>12</sup> Instead, their relationships with their former owners, now considered patrons, could give them access to social and economic opportunities. Similarly, although many slaves experienced severe violence and deprivation, some held important roles within the household that allowed them to gain power and occasionally even wealth.<sup>13</sup> As a result, when considering the relationships of these classes to urban space, it is critical to remember the wide range of economic needs within each class. Most likely, the priorities of each other class appeared in the lives of some freedpeople and slaves, including the ‘middle’ classes’ emphasis on trade access and the elite emphasis on visibility and power. As we shall see, though, Republican Pompeii created unique opportunities for these classes to gain social power, even without access to elected office.

Class mattered at Pompeii, impacting the ways in which different groups interacted with the layout of the city. Class and physical space affect one another since “residents of a city rarely agree completely on what societal norms should be;” urban spaces reflect “competition as some people try using street space in new or opposing ways that are tolerated, accepted, or rejected.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, viewing the different priorities of each group as played out in Pompeii’s urban

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<sup>12</sup> Cooley and Cooley, *Pompeii*, 146.

<sup>13</sup> Michele George, “The Lives of Slaves,” in *The World of Pompeii*, ed. John J. Dobbins and Pedar W. Foss (New York: Routledge, 2007): 541.

<sup>14</sup> Kaiser, *Roman Urban Street Networks*, 1.

landscape reveals the ways in which each class gained or lost power in key moments of the life of the city.

#### REPUBLICAN POMPEII: THE MIXED-USE CITY

The transition from Republican to Augustan Pompeii constituted one such key moment in which the urban landscape began to shift, responding to the imperial age's new power structure. During the Republican period, Pompeii was a mixed-use and mixed-power system, accommodating non-elite visibility and power through fairly open traffic patterns and the cult of the *Lares Compitales*.

#### Traffic and Visibility

Traffic reflected the range of social classes in Pompeii. The elite rode in light chariots, *curri*; carriages, *carrucae* or *raedae*; or women's carriages, *carpenta* or *pilenta*. Lower-class cart drivers, in contrast, relied upon ox-drawn heavy carts, or *plostra*, to carry goods through the city.<sup>15</sup> In addition, human and animal labor hauled smaller loads to addresses throughout the city,<sup>16</sup> and pedestrians took advantage of Pompeii's sidewalks and crossing stones. During the Republican period, major streets and the forum admitted all these forms of traffic,<sup>17</sup> allowing class to play out visibly on the urban landscape. As drivers, passengers, and pedestrians of various kinds moved down the street, it must have been easy for a viewer to distinguish the class connoted by each method of transportation.

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<sup>15</sup> Kaiser, "Cart Traffic Flow in Pompeii and Rome," 175.

<sup>16</sup> Eric E. Poehler, "Where to Park?: Carts, Stables, and the Economics of Transport in Pompeii," in *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space*, ed. Ray Laurence and David J. Newsome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 195.

<sup>17</sup> Based on a map by Kaiser, "Cart Traffic Flow in Pompeii and Rome," 178.

Due to the visibility of class in the Republican period, Pompeii's major traffic zones were mixed-use sites. For example, the forum included elite "candidates canvassing for votes," 'middle' class merchants selling goods at temporary markets, slaves running errands, and—at least in this period—upper and lower class vehicles moving through this major town landmark.<sup>18</sup> Each of the different classed understandings of space coexisted in the same location, meaning that no class truly dominated the space or was able to enforce its interpretation of the appropriate use of that space upon Pompeii.

### The *Lares Compitales* and Urban Power

In line with the mixed-use system shown by Republican Pompeii's traffic patterns, a series of urban landmarks suggest that non-elite Pompeians had formal roles and avenues to prominence, even if they could not run for elite offices. Throughout Pompeii, small altars either attached on one side to a building façade or standing independently dotted the streets, usually appearing along major crossroads.<sup>19</sup> These altars, shrines to the cult of the *Lares Compitales*, marked neighborhood-based centers of religious and social life, and their rituals gave power to Pompeii's non-elite. Thanks to a passage from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, scholars generally agree that the shrines to the *Lares Compitales* marked the center or boundaries of *vici*, neighborhood units common throughout the Roman world.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, they were sites of small-scale interactions throughout the city, bringing neighbors together and helping to define the urban landscape.

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<sup>18</sup> Kaiser, *Roman Urban Street Networks*, 104-105.

<sup>19</sup> Lara Anniboletti, "Testimonianze Preromane del Culto Domestico a Pompei: I Compiti Vicinalia sulla Facciata di Abitazioni." *The Journal of Fasti Online* 83 (2007): 2, accessed March 29, 2013 [www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2007-83.pdf](http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2007-83.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Laurence, *Roman Pompeii*, 41.



In addition to their role as social centers, the shrines to the *Lares Compitales* also served as religious centers, and roles in their cult practices gave power to non-elite Pompeians. The cult of the *Lares Compitales* appears to have included freeborn, freedmen, and slaves in official positions, turning these neighborhood cult centers into mixed-use and mixed-power sites. Roles in the cult allowed multiple groups to intermingle, each demonstrating their importance as neighborhood leaders even though they “did not get another chance higher up the ladder of social acceptance.”<sup>21</sup> An inscription dating to 47/46 BCE lists this interaction amongst multiple classes:

C(aio) Iulio Caesare dict(atore) iter(um)  
M(arco) Antonio mag(istro) eq(uum)  
Mag(istri) vici et compiti  
M(arcus) Blattius M(arci) f(ilius)  
M(arcus) Sepullius [...]  
[...]  
P(ublius) Ro[...]ius [...]  
S(alvius) E[...]ro M(arci)  
[C(aio) Caes]are M(arco) Lepido co[n]s[ulibus]  
[...] Blattius M(arci) f(ilius)  
C(aius) Ermatorius P(ubl[i]i) f(ilius)  
M(arcus) Titius Plutus M(arci) l(ibertus)  
M(arcus) Stronnius Nic[...] M(arcus) l(ibertus)  
M(arcus) Oppius Aes[...] Sp(urii) l(ibertus)  
C(aius) Cepidius C(aii) [...]  
[...] (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 6375)

When Gaius Iulius Caesar was dictator for the second time  
And Marcus Antonius was master of the horse [47 BCE]  
The administrators of the neighborhood and crossroads (or Compital cult) were:  
Marcus Blattius, son of Marcus  
Marcus Sepullius [...]  
[...]  
Publius Ro[...]ius slave of [...]  
Salvius E[...]ro, slave of Marcus  
When Gaius Caesar and Marcus Lepidus were consuls [46 BCE]  
[...] Blattius, son of Marcus  
Gaius Ermatorius, son of Publius  
Marcus Titius Plutus, freedman of Marcus  
Marcus Stronnius Nic[...], freedman of Marcus

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<sup>21</sup> Jongman, “The Loss of Innocence,” 513.

Marcus Oppius Aes[...], freedman of Spurius  
 Gaius Cepidius, [...] of Gaius  
 [...].<sup>22</sup>

Although the order of names suggests that there may have been a hierarchy privileging the freeborn over the freed and the freed over the enslaved, each class had an official role as *magister* in the cult of the *Lares Compitales* and, most likely, a certain amount of prestige in the neighborhood. Additionally, while there were certainly freeborn officials in this cult, as shown by the formula “son of...,” it is unclear what class status—elite, ‘middle,’ or free poor—these officials held. Ultimately, this inscription shows that the cult of the *Lares Compitales* created mixed-use and mixed-power neighborhood centers on Pompeii’s local scale, and that it offered avenues to power and status for non-elite Pompeians. Traffic flow and neighborhood cults created a mixed-use and mixed-power system in Republican Pompeii; however, as the shrines of the *Lares Compitales* began to fall into disrepair in the late Republican or early Augustan periods, this system was soon to change.

#### REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE: THE CHANGES IN THE CAPITAL

As Augustus gained power, cities throughout the Roman world adapted to the new leadership with architectural innovations and the establishment of the imperial cult. However, at least in Rome, Augustus also ushered in new understandings of neighborhoods, class status, and individual civic loyalty. Although Augustus’ reorganization of the city into fourteen *regiones* may be the most famous example of this shift,<sup>23</sup> the *vici* centering around shrines to the *Lares Compitales* were also key to his reconceptualization of his relationship to the city of Rome. In

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<sup>22</sup> All translations by me unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>23</sup> Lott, *The Neighborhoods of Augustan Rome*, 3.

the late Republic, these shrines crumbled or disappeared altogether,<sup>24</sup> a slow deterioration that appeared in Pompeii as well. In Rome, Augustus showered attention on individual shrines throughout the city starting in 10 BCE. Buying their land back from private owners, paying for the rebuilding of the altars, or donating statues, he created a massive neighborhood revitalization project piece by piece.<sup>25</sup>

This building project created direct ties between Augustus, now recast in the familiar role of a local patron, and all inhabitants of Rome. In particular, this link extended to the city's lowest social classes, the freedpeople and slaves who dominated the cult of the *Lares Compitales* in Rome as *magistri*, administrators, and *ministri*, assistants, respectively.<sup>26</sup> Augustus reaffirmed his tie to neighborhood inhabitants in 7 BCE when he renamed the *Lares Compitales* the *Lares Augusti*. According to J. Bert Lott, in this moment Augustus created a unified vision of empire based on neighborhood identity. As quoted in the opening of this paper, "[t]he decision to title the compital Lares with the epithet Augusti pulled the neighborhoods, their religion, and their inhabitants into the new system of the Principate and declared the active support [of] the city's lower classes to be one of the ideals of the new regime."<sup>27</sup> Renaming the *Lares Compitales*, Augustus exerted his ownership over the shrines and their neighborhoods. Thus, daily interactions at these neighborhood shrines became daily encounters with the imperial ideology and small-scale declarations of support for Augustus' regime.

#### REPUBLIC TO EMPIRE: THE CASE OF POMPEII

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<sup>24</sup> Lott, *The Neighborhoods of Augustan Rome*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Lott, *The Neighborhoods of Augustan Rome*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Mariah Elaine Smith, "To Seek the Boundaries of the Roman Lares: Interaction and Evolution" (Masters Diss., University of Kansas, 2009): 19, accessed March 29, 2013, <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/handle/1808/5321>.

<sup>27</sup> Lott, *The Neighborhoods of Augustan Rome*, 110.

Around the same time as Augustus introduced these changes to Rome, something very different was happening at Pompeii. Although the two towns appeared similar during the late Republic period, when both allowed the shrines to fall apart, the Augustan period did not promote the same revitalization at Pompeii. There is no evidence that the Pompeian *Lares Compitales* ever became the *Lares Augusti*.<sup>28</sup> Instead, new cults and new social centers took over the functions of the cult of the *Lares Compitales*, and, recognizing an opportunity to gain power, the elite tried to use this transition to replace the earlier mixed-use spaces with those that reflected their dominance.

#### The Decline of the *Lares Compitales*

The decline of the cult of the *Lares Compitales* limited non-elite access to power, eliminating the formal roles shared by the freeborn, freed, and enslaved in the Republican period. In the place of the *Lares Compitales*, imperial cult worship became popular during the Augustan period. At Pompeii, a local elite named Marcus Tullius built a temple to Augustan Fortune just north of the Forum in the early first century CE,<sup>29</sup> establishing this new worship in a location that became increasingly important during the early imperial period, as we shall see. Although the non-elite, particularly freedpeople, seem to have had roles in the imperial cult in some Italian towns, the Pompeian evidence points to predominately—if not exclusively—elite power in this cult. A series of inscriptions list the *ministri*, attendants, of the new temple to Augustan Fortune. Although many of these *ministri* are slaves, echoing the roles of slaves in the cult of the *Lares Compitales*, the changes in epigraphic formula hint at a new power structure. For example, an inscription from 3 CE reads:

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<sup>28</sup> Laurence, *Roman Pompeii*, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Cooley and Cooley, *Pompeii*, 92.

Agathemerus Vetti  
Suavis Caesiae Primae  
Pothus Numitori  
Anteros Lacutulani  
Minist(ri) prim(i) Fortun(ae) Aug(ustae) iuss(u)  
M(arci) Stai Rufi Cn(aei) Melissaei d(uo)v(irorum) i(ure) d(icundo)  
P(ublio) Silio L(ucio) Volusio Saturn(ino) co(n)s(ulibus) (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*  
6382)

Agathemerus, slave of Vettius  
Suavis, slave of Caesia Prima  
Pothus, slave of Numitor  
Anteros, slave of Lacutulanus  
First attendants of Augustan Fortune,  
By the edict of Marcus Staius Rufus and Cnaeus Melissaeus, duumvirs  
During the consulship of Publius Silius and Lucius Volusius Saturninus [3 CE]

In this and other inscriptions, owners' names are written out rather than appearing in a highly abbreviated form, as seen in the list of the *Lares Compitales' magistri vici et compiti*. In the post-Augustan period, owners' names take up even more space, including all three parts of the name (*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* 4383). This suggests that, while slaves still held a role, there was an increasing focus on their owners' prestige rather than their own. Importantly, no freedpeople are explicitly mentioned in these inscriptions. These shifts away from freedpeople and slaves toward slave owners suggest that the new imperial cults gave opportunities to the elite rather than the non-elite. Thus, the decline of the cult of the *Lares Compitales* decreased non-elite access to official positions and prestige within Pompeii. Additionally, the tie to neighborhood life disappeared in the imperial cult, creating an opportunity for new centers of neighborhood life to appear that lacked the tie to non-elite power.

#### The Rise of the Forum: Replacing the *Lares Compitales*

The decline of the cult of the *Lares Compitales* meant that Pompeii's neighborhoods temporarily lost their social centers until newly-constructed fountains became gathering points in

the Augustan period. Around the same time as Augustus was revitalizing Rome's *Lares Compitales* and retitling them the *Lares Augusti*, Pompeii received an aqueduct, and public fountains sprang up throughout town to distribute the new water supply. Given their uniform construction and use of the aqueduct, the fountains likely required official civic planning and construction.<sup>30</sup> Like the shrines to the *Lares Compitales*, scholars have associated the water fountains with neighborhoods, arguing that they acted as gathering places for local Pompeian populations.<sup>31</sup> However, few have considered the possibility that the new Augustan fountains displaced the older, now unmaintained shrines as the social foci of neighborhoods. Laurence comes the closest, saying, "the establishment of public fountains may have altered the existing pattern of social activity at a local level within the city."<sup>32</sup>

In fact, there is some evidence to suggest these altered social patterns. Ray Laurence's maps of the placements of shrines and fountains reveal two different trends.<sup>33</sup> East of the Via Stabiana/Via del Vesuvio<sup>34</sup> in Regio I-V and IX, fountains primarily appear close to shrines. This suggests that the fountains replaced the shrines in these areas of town while preserving the earlier spatial divisions. It is important to note, however, that the east side of town also contains large unexcavated areas, so this pattern of maintaining earlier neighborhood centers may not be as clear-cut as it seems. West of the Via Stabiana/Via del Vesuvio in Regio VI-VII, the number of fountains greatly surpasses the number of shrines, and the locations of the two are less connected. While there are twenty-two fountains in this area of town, there are only eleven

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<sup>30</sup> Gemma Jansen, "The Water System: Supply and Drainage," in *The World of Pompeii*, ed. John J. Dobbins and Pedar W. Foss (New York: Routledge, 2007): 260-261.

<sup>31</sup> Laurence, *Roman Pompeii*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Laurence, *Roman Pompeii*, 48.

<sup>33</sup> This and following analyses based on maps created by Laurence, *Roman Pompeii*, 43 and 47.

<sup>34</sup> Although one street, the north and south sections of this road have different modern names. For clarity, both are used here.

shrines to the *Lares Compitales*. Their placement suggests that this part of town became increasingly important. Regio VI is also home to Pompeii's forum, which saw an influx in elite donations and the aggrandizement of its public buildings in the Augustan period.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the Augustan fountains may have reflected a new focus on the forum in this period, enhancing its role as a center of public life.

### The Rise of the Forum: Constructing Elite Power

The fountains did more than just bring people to the forum. They also allowed powerful Pompeians to shape who could access the forum and in what ways, reflecting growing elite power over Pompeii's public spaces. In several places around the city, but particularly in four of the forum's five entrances, the fountains acted as roadblocks limiting cart traffic. This blockade system restricted access to what would have been a major route through the city, a dramatic change in line with new city-wide traffic patterns. By the time of Pompeii's destruction in 79 CE, wheeled vehicles of all types encountered obstacles including one-way traffic and blocked streets, and the largest ox-drawn carts could use only a few streets on the outskirts of town.<sup>36</sup> Even as the fountains created social centers that drew Pompeians toward the forum, their use as roadblocks forced inhabitants to use the space as pedestrians rather than as higher-class carriage passengers or lower-class cart drivers.<sup>37</sup> Although this traffic restriction affected multiple sectors of Pompeian society, the lower-class drivers would have felt its impact most acutely since the loss of access to the forum actively limited their ability to move and work in Pompeii. Once part

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<sup>35</sup> John J. Dobbins, "The Pompeii Forum Project 1994-5," in *Sequence and Space in Pompeii*, ed. Sara E. Bon and Rick Jones (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1997): 86.

<sup>36</sup> Kaiser, "Cart Traffic Flow in Pompeii and Rome," 181.

<sup>37</sup> Kaiser, "Cart Traffic Flow in Pompeii and Rome," 175.

of most major routes through the city, the forum's new inaccessibility would have forced drivers to rely on multiple small cart loads or human and animal labor for the majority of deliveries.<sup>38</sup>

As roadblocks, the fountains limited the uses of the forum and, therefore, limited the visibility of lower-class activities. Before the arrival of the fountains, the forum was a contested space. On the one hand, elite Pompeians relied upon the forum as a business or networking site. On the other hand, many non-elite Pompeians, particularly the 'middle' classes dependent on trade and the lower classes that worked from them, used the forum as a site for buying, selling, and transporting goods. In the Augustan period, the uses of the forum decreased, transforming it from a mixed-use site into an elite-dominated space. By using the fountains to block cart traffic, Pompeii's elite legitimated their understanding of the forum space while physically refusing to admit the interpretations of all of Pompeii's non-elite classes.

Combined with the decline of the *Lares Compitales*, a cult that gave roles and opportunities for power to lower-class Pompeians, this proclamation of control over the forum highlights that the changes in Augustan Pompeii's urban space reinforced the power of the elite. Pompeii's social centers did not emphasize a connection between the imperial power and the city's lower classes as at Rome, but instead actively removed power and access from lower and 'middle' class Pompeians, replacing shrines and open streets with the imperial cult and fountains that reflected elite understandings of space.

#### THE NEW ROLES OF THE ELITE: BRINGING ROME TO POMPEII

The spatial consolidation of elite power seen in rise of fountains and the decline of the shrines of the *Lares Compitales* echoes elite attempts to take advantage of the new imperial

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<sup>38</sup> Poehler, "Where to Park?," 195.



power, from aqueducts to relationships with the emperor. Pompeii's new elite-dominated urban environment reinforced the power of the elite as the intermediaries between Pompeii and Rome. Italy's elite classes benefited from the new power structure at Rome, successfully gaining "social recognition and political power" at Rome.<sup>39</sup> This new social recognition came at the expense of the non-elite inhabitants of their towns, limiting the latter's access to the imperial system. According to Cassius Dio, Maecenas supposedly argued for this limitation of imperial access to the elite, saying, "μήτε πρεσβείαν τινὰ πρὸς σέ, πλὴν εἰ πρᾶγμα τι διαγνώσεως ἐχόμενον εἴη, πεμπέτωσαν...καὶ δι' ἐκείνου σοι τὰς ἀξιώσεις, ὅσας ἂν δοκιμάσῃ, προσφερέτωσαν," "they [city inhabitants] must not send an embassy to you,...but must make their cases before their chief magistrate, whatever cases they want, and through him bring to you those he has found to be worthy" (*Historiae Romanae* 52.30.9). This speech reveals that the elite's role as intermediaries between their towns and Augustus himself also carried the ability to translate imperial expectations to their local settings, shaping what was and was not worthy of the new empire.

Back in Pompeii, the elite displayed their new role as intermediaries imbued with knowledge of the imperial order through monumental building projects. These building projects allowed them to proclaim their connection to the emperor as well as limiting 'middle' and lower class uses of space, as seen through the fountains. The forum's Eumachia Building and the Holconii brothers' renovation of Pompeii's large theatre are the best examples of building projects connecting the elite to the emperor. Although the date of the Eumachia Building is disputed, John H. D'Arms argues for an Augustan construction based on parallels to the Porticus

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990): 2.

of Livia at Rome. If this dating is correct, the Eumachia building reflected attempts to link a prominent Pompeian woman to the preeminent Roman woman, Augustus' wife.<sup>40</sup>

This attempt to create analogies between elite Pompeians and the imperial family was also present in the Holconii brothers' renovation of the large theatre, but this time, Marcus Holconius Rufus created a link to Augustus himself. To D'Arms, the choice to renovate a theatre echoes Augustus' adoption of the title *pater patriae* in a theatre as well as the emperor's clear interest in theatre construction at Rome. As a result, "Holconius was making a peculiarly appropriate gesture in seeing to the commemoration of [Augustus' adoption of the title *pater patriae*] in the newly restored theatre of his own *patria*."<sup>41</sup> Holconius' building resembled Augustan building projects and a key event in the emperor's career; therefore, Holconius resembled Augustus. Through his building projects and other aspects of his self-representation, Marcus Holconius Rufus' accomplishments linked "Augustus—commander, benefactor, and father of all Italy—with his local analogue: M. Holconius Rufus, chief magistrate, benefactor, and protector of Pompeii."<sup>42</sup>

Thanks to building projects that created analogies between the imperial family and elite Pompeians, the shift away from a mixed-use system towards an elite-dominated urban environment reoccurred throughout town. Not only did lower class Pompeians need to conform to elite expectations every time they carried goods to the forum on animals rather than carts, all non-elite classes—'middle,' lower, freed, et al.—also tacitly endorsed the elite as representatives of imperial power every time they sat in the theatre or walked past the Eumachia building. The

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<sup>40</sup> John H. D'Arms, "Pompeii and Rome in the Augustan Age and Beyond: the Eminence of the *Gens Holoconia*," in *Romans on the Bay of Naples and Other Essays on Roman Campania*, ed. Fausto Zevi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970): 421.

<sup>41</sup> D'Arms, "Pompeii and Rome in the Augustan Age and Beyond," 425.

<sup>42</sup> D'Arms, "Pompeii and Rome in the Augustan Age and Beyond," 426.

elite building projects reflected their successful manipulation of the new imperial structure for their own benefit. If the elite represented Augustus, then the entire imperial system stood behind the changes the elite made to the forum, the theatre, and every other part of town.

## CONCLUSION

Through allowing the shrines to the *Lares Compitales* to decline, building fountains that forced their understanding of space upon other classes, and reinforcing their ties to Rome in new monumental structures, Pompeii's elite transformed the city from a mixed-use space into an environment that reflected their power and priorities. In doing so, they consolidated power over the city, emphasizing their uses of the forum and city centers at the expense of the needs of Pompeii's various other classes. This does not mean, however, that this transition to elite urban power was ever complete. There may have been ways in which non-elite groups subverted elite expectations, using space in unexpected ways or demonstrating resistance through graffiti and other responses to elite building. Finding evidence for resistance to the growth of the elite remains for another paper, but this work will complicate the simple story presented here. After all, social change is rarely smooth. Additionally, this paper examined the ways in which class interacts with urban environment, but gender, age, and other factors must have impacted how Pompeians interacted with their city, and examining these factors will also complicate and enrich the story of elite growth. This work remains, but it is clear that the transition from Republic to empire fundamentally transformed Pompeii, and this transformation is a key part of the story of the ancient city.

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